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ABSTRACT

This study examined the process of identity development and explored the relationship between identity status of college students and their expectations of faculty. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) which yields exploration and commitment scores and a questionnaire about the role faculty should play in identity development was completed by 125 college students. Based on scores from the EIPQ, 20 percent of the participants were classified as "identity diffused," 22 percent were classified as "moratorium," 34 percent as "foreclosed," and 22 percent as identity achieved. One-way Analysis of Variance indicated group differences between the four identity statuses and total score on the Role of Faculty questionnaire. Principal component factor analysis was used to derive two subscores representing global and inside versus outside classroom activities. Students with high levels of exploration (identity achieved and moratorium) reported they wanted faculty to provide opportunities for students to explore identity-relevant issues. Diffused students, those who have neither explored nor committed to an identity, seldom wanted faculty to push them toward identity relevant issues. Results suggest that intervention efforts should be specifically designed to meet the unique needs of students of the various identity statuses. (Contains 10 references.) (Author/JLS)

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STUDENTS' IDENTITY STATUS AND MENTORSHIP FROM COLLEGE FACULTY

Lynn M. Shelley-Sireci & Tammy A. Leary

This paper describes the process of identity development and explores the relationship between identity status of college students and their expectations of faculty. College faculty have the unique opportunity to foster students' identity development. *The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire* (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel & Geisinger, 1995), and a questionnaire about the role faculty should play in identity development was completed by 125 college students. Based on scores from the *EIPQ*, 20% of the participants were classified identity diffused, 22% moratorium, 34% foreclosed, and 22% identity achieved. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated group differences between the four identity statuses and total score on the *Role of Faculty* questionnaire ($F_{(3, 118)}=2.88$, $p=.039$). Principal component factor analysis was used to derive two subscores representing global and inside versus outside classroom activities. ANOVAs on the two factor scores by the four identity statuses found significant effects for both the factors ($F_{(3,118)}=3.22$, $p=.025$, and $F_{(3,118)}=2.92$, $p=.037$ respectively). Students with high levels of exploration (identity achieved and moratorium) reported that they wanted faculty to provide opportunities for students to explore identity relevant issues. In contrast, diffused students, those who have neither explored nor committed to an

identity, seldom wanted faculty to push them toward identity relevant issues. Intervention efforts should be specifically designed to meet the unique needs of students of the various identity statuses.

Students' Identity Status and Mentorship from College Faculty

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When college faculty think about student development, cognitive and career development are typically the primary considerations. These considerations are important; however, largely ignored is socioemotional development. By the conclusion of college, students have the physical, mental, and psychological abilities to acquire a sense of placement within the world -- a sense of identity. However, college students differ with respect to the extent to which they have acquired an identity, therefore, it is hypothesized that college students have different needs from faculty based on their identity status. This paper briefly describes the process of identity development, and explores how students of various identity statuses have different expectations of faculty.

Erikson (1968) describes adolescence as a time when the individual strives to develop a personal identity. In essence, the adolescent college student must answer the questions: Who am I? Where am I going? and Who am I to become? He called this period of transition a "crisis." To answer these questions, students have numerous role choices to make. They must: decide upon a vocation;

acquire a philosophy of life (e.g., political beliefs); adopt a system of values (e.g., religious beliefs and moral values); and adopt a set of social roles (e.g., sex roles). Additionally, past identifications must be incorporated with a newly emerging sense of self, and ideas about the self in the future (Erikson, 1968). For example, a first year student may attempt to incorporate her former self of straight "A" high school student, into her current self "party animal", as well as combine these roles to form ideas of future self, "corporate executive."

According to Marcia (1980), two dimensions are important in the process of identity formation: exploration (crisis) and commitment. Exploration involves questioning the "self," choosing basic moral beliefs, interpersonal styles, habits, and life goals (Baumeister, 1991) Commitment is defined as the extent to which the adolescent shows a personal investment in the roles to be adopted. Thus, the processes of exploration and commitment entail experimentation with different roles and personalities before eventual resolution of the identity crisis on her or his own terms. Based on whether or not the individual has explored and committed, researchers can assign people into one of four categories: *identity achieved* (the individual has made commitments after a period of crisis and exploration), *moratorium* (the individual is in the process of exploration and has not yet made commitments), *foreclosure* (the individual has made commitments but without a period of crisis), and *identity diffusion* (the individual has not

made commitments and is not in the process of exploration). During this process, the student may be rebellious one minute, and cooperative the next; bounce from one best friend to another; change interests quickly; dress neatly one day, and wear "grunge" the next; or even change majors three or four times in a single semester.

The critical time for exploration and commitment appear to be the later teens and early twenties (Marcia, 1980). Additionally, current research finds that developmental status of identity or ego has been linked to numerous psychological and behavioral factors. For example, immature ego development has been related to risky sexual behavior (Hernandes, & DiClementer, 1992), and the nature and amount of career indecision (Vandracek, Schulenberg, Skorikov, Gillespie, & Wahlheim, 1995).

How well the adolescent handles the identity crisis depends on many factors, such as cognitive level, whether there are opportunities for exploration and decision making, as well as the quality and quantity of role models. Erikson (1968) contends that the primary key to resolving the identity crisis lies in interactions with others. In the process of identity formation, adolescents look to the environment for role models and emanate them. Today, new fields of study and unconventional career paths exist that were non-existent 30 years ago. Traditional role models, such as parents, often are unable to provide adequate alternatives and opportunities for students. This search provides a unique

mentoring opportunity for college faculty (Haensly & Parsons, 1993).

College faculty members can foster student identity development in numerous ways (Shelley-Sireci, 1996). Professors help foster career development, serve as role models, can introduce identity relevant material into the classroom, and can encourage self-reflection (Waterman, 1989). Additionally, professors can provide opportunities to explore different roles, and provide reinforcement and encouragement -- thereby empowering students to explore different roles and eventually commit to a personal identity. Of course, the introduction of identity relevant material should occur only when appropriate, and the personal opinions and experiences of professors must be clearly stated as such. Furthermore, it is crucial that the professor feel comfortable with this task. However, professors have circumstantially found that students are interested in these issues; thus, the present study will investigate whether or not students want college faculty to foster identity development, and if their desires are related to identity status.

Procedure

One-hundred-twenty-five college students from a small New England state college volunteered to anonymously complete *The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire* (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995), as well as a self-report questionnaire about the role faculty should play in student's lives.

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Sample

Two-thirds of the participants were female (*n*=82 female, *n*=43 male). Both traditional full-time students (77%) and non-traditional (continuing education) students (23%) participated in the study. The mean age of the participants was 22.6 (*sd*=4.5, range 18-41). The major field of study for the participants varied, however, the majority of the students majored in psychology (26%) or education (25%).

Measures

The 32 item *Ego Identity Process Questionnaire* (*EIPQ*; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) is an identity inventory that yields exploration and commitment scores. The *EIPQ* was scored following Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger's procedures. Item scores were summed to obtain separate total scores for the dimensions commitment and exploration. Scores could range from 16 to 96. To determine the identity statuses of the participants, the commitment score of 62, and exploration score of 66.5 was used to identify low or high commitment and exploration. These scores were selected by Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger (1995) because they represented the median scores for their sample. Similarly, they represented the 44th cumulative percentile rank for commitment, and the 58th cumulative percentile rank for exploration in the present sample. Participants with high scores for both commitment and exploration were classified as

identity achieved, and those with low scores were classified as identity diffused. Participants with high exploration and low commitment were classified as moratorium, and those with low exploration and high commitment were classified as foreclosed.

To determine the behaviors students believe faculty should engage in, participants also completed an 18 item *Role of Faculty* questionnaire. Using a 6-point Likert-type scale (1=never, 6=frequently), respondents indicated how frequently they felt college faculty should employ specific behaviors hypothesized to promote identity development (e.g. encourage student participation, assign self-reflective work, etc.). Adequate reliability was found for the questionnaire (alpha=.79).

Results

Based on scores from the *EIPQ*, 20% (*n*=25) of the participants were classified identity diffused, 22% (*n*=28) of the participants were classified identity moratorium, 34% (*n*=43) of the participants were classified identity foreclosed, and 22% (*n*=27) of the participants were classified identity achieved (two subjects had missing data and were therefore dropped for the remainder of analyses).

For traditional students (*n*=91, full-time students attending classes during the day), 23% were classified identity diffused, 22% moratorium, 34% foreclosed, and 20% identity achieved. Non-traditional students (*n*=31) demonstrated a different distribution of identity statuses: 13% were classified identity diffused, 19%

moratorium, 39% foreclosed, and 26% identity achieved. Hence, compared to traditional students, non-traditional students had a greater tendency to be classified as foreclosed or achieved, and less of a tendency to be classified as diffused or moratorium.

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated group differences between the four identity statuses and total score on the *Role of Faculty* questionnaire ($F_{(3, 118)}=2.88$, $p=.039$). To further evaluate the *Role of Faculty* questionnaire, principle component factor analysis was used to derive two subscores representing global and inside versus outside classroom activities. ANOVAs on the two factor scores by the four identity statuses found significant effects for both the global factor ($F_{(3, 118)}=3.22$, $p=.025$), and the inside versus outside classroom activities factor ($F_{(3, 118)}=2.92$, $p=.037$). Students classified as being identity achieved or moratorium (both groups characterized by high levels of exploration), consistently reported that they wanted faculty to provide opportunities for students to explore identity relevant issues.

Evaluations of individual items were also conducted. One-way ANOVA was utilized to see of there were group differences between the four identity statuses and their opinions about the role of faculty. Each item was utilized as a dependent variable, therefore, 18 ANOVAs were conducted. To control for Type I error due to the large number of ANOVAs, and to balance the exploratory nature of

the present study, alpha was selected to be .01.

Five items revealed significant effects of identity status. There was a significant effect for the item that asked if faculty should encourage student participation in the classroom ($F_{(3, 118)}$=4.52, p=.005). There was a significant effect for the item that asked if professors should provide leadership opportunities for students in the classroom (e.g. running a discussion, $F_{(3, 118)}$=6.65, p=.001). There was a significant effect for the item that asked if professors should encourage students to be confrontational and challenging (e.g. disagree with or debate the professor or other students, $F_{(3, 117)}$=5.04, p=.003). There was a significant effect for the item that asked if professors should encourage students to be question their beliefs (e.g. political, moral beliefs, $F_{(3, 117)}$=7.56, p=.001). And finally, there was a significant effect for the question that asked if professors should encourage students to conduct independent study or research ($F_{(3, 117)}$=7.56, p=.001).

Two additional items illustrated trends toward significance. One asked if professors should challenge students to defend their beliefs (political beliefs, moral beliefs, etc.), and the second item asked students if a professor should give an individual student advice about how to meet career goals. Moratorium students had the highest average score for both of these items, indicating that they believed professors should engage in these behaviors frequently.

Mean Scores by Identity Status

	Identity Status			
	Diffused	Moratorium	Foreclosed	Achieved
Participation In Classroom	3.7	5.5	5.3	5.6
Leadership Opportunities	4.0	5.1	4.8	5.3
Confront and Challenge	4.7	5.2	4.7	5.4
Question Beliefs	3.5	4.9	3.6	4.4
Independent Work	4.4	4.5	4.6	5.2

Conclusion

To conclude, students in this study demonstrated that their needs and wants from college faculty varied according to their identity status. Individuals who have achieved an identity, or who are in the process of investigating identity relevant issues, desire for college faculty to foster identity development, for example by encouraging class participation, challenging students to question their beliefs, or providing leadership opportunities for their students. Students who have committed to an identity without exploring different options, and those who have neither committed nor explored have little interest in faculty providing opportunities to explore identity related issues.

These results suggest that future intervention efforts designed to foster identity development in college students should be specifically designed for individuals based on their identity status. Furthermore, evaluation of intervention efforts should

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always consider previous and current identity status of the individuals.

Certainly, there are weaknesses of the present study, such as poor generalizability. Participants were predominantly female, and the study included both traditional and non-traditional students, which encompassed a broad age span. Adult students were included in the study because they too deal with identity issues; however, it has been suggested that the process of identity exploration during adulthood is different than during adolescence (Waterman & Archer, 1990). Additionally, the *Role of Faculty* questionnaire was not designed to assess identity relevant issues. Future research should address each of these shortcomings.

The present study explores an area of identity development previously ignored. Identity development is commonly discussed as linked to experiences in college, however this paper for the first time explores how identity status is related to the individual's perception of the college experience, specifically of faculty. This research provides an important foundation for future research, as well as intervention efforts.

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